

California Electric and Magnetic Fields Program N E W S L E T T E R

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES UPDATE

June/July 2000

BIOELECTROMAGNETICS SOCIETY MEETING

The annual meeting of the Bioelectromagnetics Society was held in Munich, Germany, from June 12-16, 2000. As a consequence of the choice of venue, most of the attendees were European; this may also reflect the possibility that funding for, and interest in, EMF research in the United States is ebbing. Many of the early registrants did not attend and a large number of posters were not displayed.

Vincent DelPizzo attended the conference from the California EMF Program. Unfortunately, as reported in the last newsletter, Gerri Lee and Raymond Neutra were not able to attend because of the need to work on the Risk Evaluation. Both were forced to withdraw their presentations.

There were no major results reported at the meeting on research on 50-60 Hz fields and the most useful aspect of the conference was the informal exchange of opinion and information in between sessions.

RESEARCH UNIT PROGRESS

School Policy Analysis: Project consultant Keith Florig met with Raymond Neutra and Vincent DelPizzo from May 24-26, 2000, to review comments on his draft document. The contractor will make a number of changes in response to the comments received, and will rewrite the executive summary using less technical language, with the goal of ensuring that it can better stand on its own. He will submit a new executive summary and a revised version of the document to the Program later this summer. These revised products will then go to the peer reviewers, along with the public comments and the contractors' responses. When these materials go to the peer reviewers, we will send the comments and contractors' responses to the stakeholders for their information. After the peer review is completed, the drafts will be revised again based on the peer reviewers' input.

Project Milestones May 16, 2000, through July 15, 2000

- First internal draft of the Risk Evaluation completed
- Probability Elicitation Workshop for Department of Health Services scientists (related to the Risk Evaluation) held on June 27-29, 2000
- Public comment period for the School Policy Project completed May 22, 2000; comments forwarded to Dr. Florig

Power Grid/Land Use Policy Analysis: In June, the Program reviewed the rewrite of the main chapters of the Power Grid Policy Project received from project consultant Detlof von Winterfeldt. Dr. von Winterfeldt is now working on some further revisions and on the new executive summary. The revised drafts will then be sent to the peer reviewers along with the stakeholders' comments, Dr. von Winterfeldt's responses to those comments, and the report from Commonwealth Engineers on the costs of the engineering options used in the project. The new draft will also be sent to electrical engineers at the Independent Systems Operator (ISO) and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for comments on the costs and feasibility of the engineering options discussed. When these materials go to the peer reviewers, we will send the Commonwealth report, the comments, and the responses to the stakeholders for their information.

Epidemiology Workshop: Most papers are in press at the Bioelectromagnetics Journal. A few papers are being revised by the authors according to the peer reviewers' instructions.

Prospective Miscarriage Study: De Kun Li presented preliminary results of his Prospective Miscarriage Study for peer comment at the Society for Epidemiological Research. We understood from him and others who attended the presentation that it was well received and that, like the external peer reviewers (Abdelmonem Afifi, Lowell Sever, Michael Criqui, and Nancy Wertheimer), attendees found no obvious flaws in his study. In mid-July, Dr. Li will incorporate comments made by the peer reviewers into his report and will submit the manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed journal that will give us permission to cite the results in our risk evaluation. We will comment on the results of this study when it is released with the Risk Evaluation or when it is published, whichever comes first.

Occupational Exposure Study: The completed project report is undergoing peer review.

Risk Evaluation: Detlof von Winterfeldt provided probability elicitation training to the Risk Evaluation core team of Raymond Neutra, Vincent DePizzo, and Gerri Lee on May 18, 2000. After the initial training, Dr. von Winterfeldt oversaw the team members' preliminary estimations of their degrees of confidence that EMFs from the power grid and appliances might cause epidemiologically detectable disease. Based on this training, the core team provided their draft degrees of confidence in causality and International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifications for the diseases and endpoints examined in the Risk Evaluation.

In early June, the first draft of the Risk Evaluation was distributed to the DHS scientists who had previously reviewed portions of the EMF literature. This group includes toxicologists, physicians, epidemiologists, and environmental exposure assessment experts. From June 27-29, 2000, the research staff held a workshop for these reviewers. Warren Winkelstein, the chair of the Program's Science Advisory Panel, observed the first day of the workshop when Dr. von Winterfeldt provided probability elicitation training. On the second and third days of the workshop, the group critiqued the format, logic, and conclusions of the first draft. They also turned over their anonymous, marked-up manuscripts to the core team. The reviewers had a number of useful suggestions for tightening up the logic and the format of the document. The core team is now working on a revised draft, which is scheduled to be sent to the Science Advisory Panel for independent comments in the early fall.

EMF Program Library: Webb Sprague continues to upgrade and update the Program's library.

EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UNIT UPDATE

State PTA Newsletter item on the School Wiring Video

The Program's Health Educator, Jessica Hecht, wrote a short description of the school wiring video (produced by Southern California Edison) for a statewide PTA newsletter. This article explains the purpose of the wiring video and informs them that the state Department of Education sent copies of it to each public school district in the state. The item also explains that the video will be available to the public for the cost of copying and postage later this year. Specific ordering information will be distributed to stakeholders in the near future.

Support of the Research Unit

Members of the Education Unit spent a great deal of time over the past two months assisting members of the research unit in preparing for the Risk Evaluation Probability Elicitation Workshop, which took place June 27-29, 2000. In addition to participating in the planning of the workshop, the unit helped develop the agenda and other materials that were distributed during the workshop, and attended portions of the meeting.

Health Education Assistant Activities

Learning: Thrown into the Program in June, the new Health Education Assistant has been spending a large portion of her time learning about EMF and the debate surrounding the possibility that it may increase health risks.

EMF Program Notebook: The Health Education Assistant has begun preparing a notebook of the Program's documents to provide a record of the Program's work. This notebook will serve as a lasting resource for anyone interested in learning about the California EMF Program's findings and accomplishments, especially after the Program's conclusion. The notebook will be updated as the Program progresses, and will ultimately contain the Program's progress reports, meeting agendas and minutes, tables of contents from Program mailings, newsletters, fact sheets, research project non-technical summaries, and research project final reports.

Wiring Video Introductory Sheet: The Health Education Assistant has created an introductory informational sheet about the video on correcting improper wiring in schools. This sheet (now in draft form) explains the origin and purpose of the video, as well as the reasons that schools should be aware of these wiring problems.

Other Education and Technical Assistance Unit Activities

Fact Sheet: The California EMF Program's short fact sheet has been updated to include some information on the EMF-RAPID Program's final report to Congress. The updated short fact sheet is now available, and has been posted on the Program's Web site.

Web site: In addition to the updated short fact sheet, the Education Unit, with the help of the Program's research associate Webb Sprague, has posted most of the Program's 1999 and 2000 newsletters on the Web site. The site continues to receive hundreds of visitors from all over the world each month.

Response to Public Questions: Over the last two months the Education Unit continued to respond to telephone calls, e-mails, and letters from people with questions about EMF. Questions have focused on exposures from appliances, power lines, and other sources in residential and occupational settings.

Related State Activities

DHS Case-Control Study: Gerri Lee has completed a draft of the case-control study on miscarriage and magnetic fields. The Program's epidemiology peer review panel (Abdelmonem Afifi, Lowell Sever, Michael Criqui, and Nancy Wertheimer) reviewed the draft, and their suggestions have been incorporated into a revised manuscript. Co-authors Robert A. Hiatt, Lilia Hristova, Raymond Neutra, and Michael Yost are currently reviewing the paper. We will comment on the results of this study when it is released with the Risk Evaluation or when it is published, whichever comes first.

Electric Blanket Study: The study of electric blankets and miscarriage is being published in the July 2000 issue of the journal *Epidemiology*, and will be distributed in a future Program mailing.

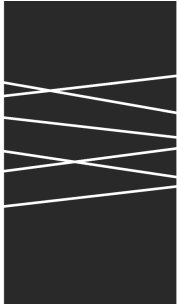
Budget and Timeline Insert

The regularly scheduled financial insert for the core SAC members will not be included in this month's newsletter. As a result of the continuing upgrade of the Public Health Institute's financial system, we have not yet received full financial statements. We are confident that the Program is operating within its budget and will send the next financial report as soon as the monthly statements become available.

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